(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration for transportation of coal through pipeline to feed the power generating plants;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what are the financial implications of such a project?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE): (a) to (c) Government have approved the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for a Demonstration Coal Slurry Pipeline of about 30 Kms in length from New Majri coal mines of Western Coalfields Ltd. to the Chandrapur Thermal Power Station of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board. Engineers (India) Ltd., has been engaged to prepare the DPR. The financial implications of the project will be known after the preparation of the DPR.

Possible danger of subsidence in some coal hearing areas

1442. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the mining experts have already identified about 25 areas including Barakar, Asansol, Neamatpur, Jamwia, Kulti and 60 more villages where subsidence may occur any moment, endangering the lives of more than six lakh people; and

(b) if so, what preventive steps have since been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE) (a) Government are aware that due to unscientific exploitation of coal during pre-nationalisation days, there is danger of subsidence in Barakar, Asansol, Neamatpur, Jamwia, Kulti and other areas. Based on the notifications issued by the Government of West Bengal and the Directorate General of Mines Safety declaring certain areas as unsafe, and the areas listed by the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute, Ranchi in the Master Plan for Raniganj Coalfields, 45 locations in West Bengal have been identified as unsafe areas.

(b) Steps taken to check subsidence include:—

(i) Mining operations are carried out in conformity with rules and regulations and strictly as per conditions imposed by the DGMS;

(ii) Extraction below built up areas is done only in conjunction with stowing;

(iii) Restricted working/extraction is carried out in case of working under shallow cover;

(iv) Construction activities over areas declared unsafe for habitation has been prohibited.

(v) Regular follow-up and liaison with the District Authorities is maintained for evacuation of people from areas declared unsafe.

An action plan on the basis of the Ramjibanpur experiment for stabilisation of old unapproachable under-ground voids in the Raniganj area has also been prepared by Eastern Coalfields Ltd. in consultation with the Regional Institute of the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute Ltd. at Asansol. The plan after approval will be implemented in phases keeping in view the availability of funds.

Hike in coal prices

1443. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to further increase the price of coal; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE): (a) At present, there is no proposal under consideration of Government to increase the price of coal.

(b) Does not arise.